

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF SAANICH

REPORT TO: Mayor and Council

DATE: May 20, 2011 **File:**

FROM: Councillors Vic Derman and Paul Gerrard

SUBJECT: Bowker Creek Watershed

RATIONALE

The Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative (BCI) has become a remarkable success story in Saanich and our region. First endorsed by Saanich, Oak Bay, Victoria and the CRD in 2003, the initiative serves as a forward looking example of watershed based planning and a signature example of inter- municipal and regional cooperation.

Now, the team responsible for the BCI has developed the "Bowker Creek Blueprint", a guide to how key goals of the initiative could be implemented and accomplished over the longer term of up to 100 years. The blueprint correctly identifies the fact that change in an established urban landscape tends to happen relatively slowly and is often accomplished over decades rather than years. It also recognizes that larger, long term goals will only be accomplished through consistent application of policies aimed at the realization of these goals.

Over time, however, politicians and staff will come and go. With the natural and inevitable replacement of those responsible for establishing the blueprint, the possibility that "corporate memory will fade" increases and, unfortunately, the likelihood of inconsistent application of key policies increases as well.

Saanich can move to protect the vision of the Bowker Creek Blueprint by insuring that it becomes entrenched in municipal legislation and development approval processes. This can be accomplished in part by making the Blueprint part of a specific Saanich action plan. However, even greater protection could be accomplished by making the entire Bowker Creek watershed within Saanich a special development permit area with guidelines based on the vision and practices described in the blueprint.

Creation of such a development permit area would insure that all development applications and other proposed changes for the watershed would be required to "pass through the lens" of the blueprint. In addition, Saanich could make its intent known to Oak Bay and Victoria and encourage those jurisdictions to establish similar special development permit areas covering their portions of the Bowker Creek Watershed. Ideally, staff from the three municipalities and other stakeholders might work together to establish common development permit guidelines. Accomplishing all of this would be a huge step towards sustainable watershed based planning and a sustainable future region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Saanich Council forward this report, at the political level, to Oak Bay and Victoria along with a letter inviting those jurisdictions to become involved in a cooperative effort to develop common development permit guidelines, based on the Bowker Creek Blueprint, for the entire Bowker Creek Watershed.

2. That this report be referred to staff and that, pending the outcome of recommendation 1, staff be directed to:

Undertake development permit guidelines for the Bowker Creek Watershed in Saanich with the intent that these guidelines should be aimed at accomplishing, over time, the vision of the Bowker Creek Blueprint.

Or:

Undertake a cooperative effort with staff from Victoria and Oak Bay as well as other stakeholders to development permit guidelines for the entire Bowker Creek Watershed with the intent that these guidelines should be aimed at accomplishing, over time, the vision of the Bowker Creek Blueprint.

3. That, for information, this report be forwarded to other stakeholders involved in creation of the Bowker Creek Blueprint.

Councillors Vic Derman and Paul Gerrard